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*JM FRANCIS*

*TALIA SMITH*

*TAYI TIBBLE*

*FAITH WILSON*

**You can't  
promenade  
alone**

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## Natasha Matila-Smith

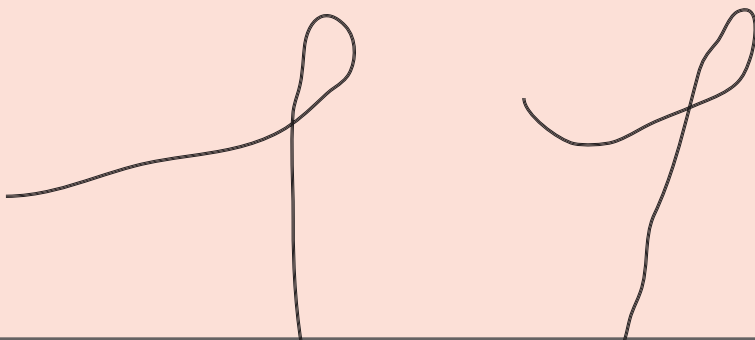
*Foreword:*

*I've done a lot of strange things that were driven by  
moments of loneliness*

I like to refer to song lyrics to title my own work. It's not a particularly unique methodology but the lyrics for *In The Flesh*, to me, posited an interesting predicament. 'Your picture ain't enough' aroused the relics of relationships—Those that can't be touched, the intangible. 'I can't wait to touch you in the flesh' implied a physical body and a very present physical urge. The word 'flesh', however, brings to mind gore and something urgently anatomical. In my mind, the association isn't romantic.

'I can't wait to see you  
Your picture ain't enough  
I can't wait to touch you in the flesh'  
*In The Flesh* (1976), Blondie

At the time of conceiving this exhibition I was thinking a lot about love and desire and where the origins of our feelings lie. I thought about the varying and obsessive qualities that accompany desire—The overwhelming and unreasonable desire to articulate the intangible as though you're going to burst, the way that public and private desire manifests in an online space, and the ways in which technology has impacted intimacy.

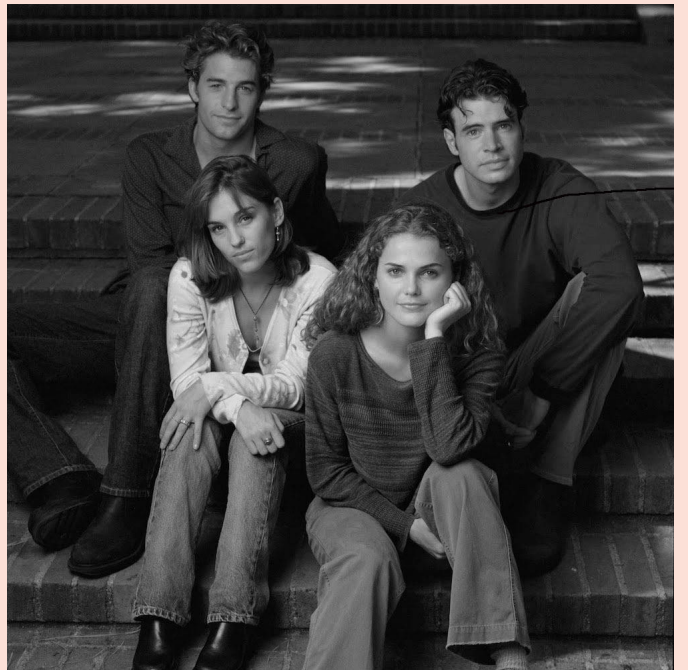


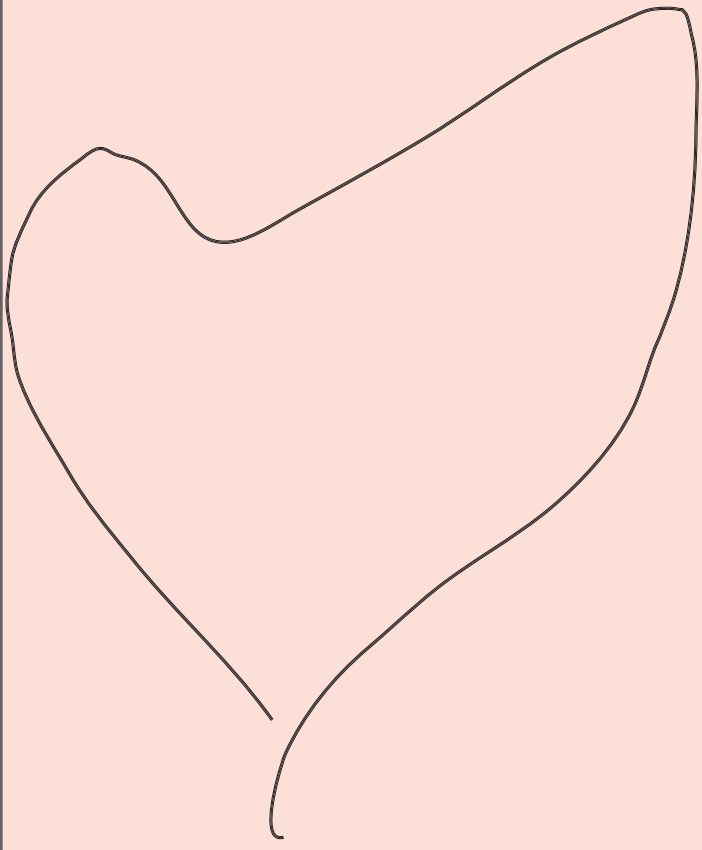
I don't want to have a conversation about the effects of social media, but I think there is something strange about modern courtship, something driven by capital, perhaps? As I write this, my friend has messaged me through Facebook, an article titled, 'Former Facebook executive: social media is ripping society apart'. 'Former vice-president of user growth, expressed regret for his part in building tools that destroy 'the social fabric of how society works' (1). 'Your behaviors, you don't realise it, but you are being programmed,' he said. I recall talking to friends for hours on end on the landline telephone, yet now I will avoid answering a call from a number I don't know.

Each of the writers in this publication attempt to somehow address the complexities of relationships and desire. **Talia Smith** talks about sexual desires, fantasising not only about the physical touch but also predicting the inevitable demise of the imagined tryst. The self-determined prophecy seems somewhat guarded, with Smith deciding upon the outcome in her head before seeing it enact in reality. **JM Francis** weaves personal tales through a deliberate aesthetic composition, discussing moments of isolation and as if recalling in mid-conversation, the recounts are fragmented and jump from moment to moment. **Faith Wilson** describes falling in love as an affliction, one which she is burdened (or perhaps blessed) with, akin to the life cycle of a rose. In another poem, she asks a series of questions albeit rhetorical—a note to self of the pressures that one places upon the relationship to the self. In the poem *Kaleidoscopes*, **Tayi Tibble** likens boys to collapsing stars, and of everyone in this publication, the experiences she narrates are the most foreign to me, but that's what I love about her work. Her work here is kind-of dark, kind-of beautiful and kind-of rebellious.

I've done a lot of strange things that were driven by moments of loneliness. I'm sure, a lot of others have too. Concepts of being 'alone' or being 'happy' are held above us by some invisible entity, like bait, causing us to act in ways we wouldn't imagine. I was watching Felicity on YouTube the other day and it seemed to work out for her—following her high school crush to university on a whim and then enrolling in classes that she knew he was in so that she could be closer to him. I mean, at first, he was mad, but by the conclusion of the show, they were a couple.

(1) Wong, Julia Carrie. "Former Facebook executive: social media is ripping society apart ". *The Guardian*. December 12, 2017.





# Tayi Tibble

## *Listening to Lana Del Rey in Cars*

Listening to Lana Del Rey in cars is being boring and bad with your best friend who just got her license and shitty second-hand car (broken speakers, playboy seat covers) for her sixteenth birthday. You buy a cherry shaped air freshener and a pair of pink furry dice for the rear-view mirror.

Listening to Lana Del Rey in cars is drinking fruity baby liquors like Schnapps and Passion Pop getting you fucked up on sugar> alcohol content. Stunted twentysomethings to buy you the cheapest wine with the highest percentage while you lurk at the back of the PAK'nSAVE carpark, where the estuary always floods, and you can count the trolleys in the harbour.

Listening to Lana Del Rey in Cars, is driving with the windows down into the city at night. Heads out the window scream-singing !DIET MOUNTAIN DEW BABY NEW YORK CITY! You don't have Jesus on your dashboard but you have a pretty hula dancer who grinds like a stripper in the red light W of the Westpac Stadium, like a neon welcome sign.

Listening to Lana Del Rey in cars talking to guys on the hood, because you're too young and too good to scam your way into a bar. When the flirtations go too far, you fake a phone call. On the way home, you stop at Denny's. The 3am waitress serves you dirty looks and rubbery eggs. She has a pinched late-night expression that says, what are you doing here? No I.D. No Service. No Exceptions.

Listening to Lana Del Rey in cars is going home and scrolling through Tumblr in each other's beds and reblogging images of American flags and tattooed men. The next day, you dip your French fries in your McDonalds sundaes for a 4pm breakfast with each other's families for company, then her mum drops you home.

Listening to Lana Del Rey in cars is texting sleepover at urs tonight? for the fourth night in a row, and waiting for the headlights to vibrate through your window. You practice scratching stick and pokes of unimportant things like 2D diamonds and triangles onto starved out hip bones and slices of ass cheek hanging out of DIY denim shorts.

Listening to Lana del Rey in cars is writing poetry for English class with regrettable phrases like there is a war in my mind and I am living in a dark paradise because you accidentally got addicted to cigarettes and can't afford so instead of smoking sexy Marlborough reds in a sundress and Ferrari jacket combo, in a condo somewhere high in the Hollywood hills....

Listening to Lana Del Rey in cars is smoking your nan's stolen rollies or Pall Mall Menthols that Paul from Science sells for a dollar. Smoke them behind the gym or on the edge of a muddy soccer field in your non-regulation knee socks and an embarrassing handmade flowercrown.

## *LBD*

there is a dark-skinned darkness in me / I wear her like a little black dress / Gucci / velvet pressed / embroidered roses on thin blue eyelids / a fault in my blood like I'm violent / moving in the club like I'm walking on water / no miracle though / mouth red like a fire engine / hair falling like debris / I grew up on the sound of women wailing / now they wail for me / I carry them inside me / bones vibrating like a ringtone / red phone dialling / he is nervous and I'm lying / listen to me hiding / in the matte black bathroom / call a cab for me soon / I want to drown / in a bath tub / carved out / of rose gold / fill it up with champagne and / shame too thick to choke down / I want to dissolve / into night / it fits / so tight and acidic / it's like a womb / the Parisian catacombs / tombs of bland white skulls / other lovers on display / mounted on the walls / of his apartment / on the bed of / my tongue / I am the dress you wear to your funeral / I am the dress you wear / then it comes off.



*WTN BOYS*

soft wellington boys in six hundred  
dollar leather want to send me their poetry  
& tie me to their beds so I tell them I like their  
fathers instead & listen to their aluminium skulls  
crack like thunder and coke cans.







**JM Francis**

*Carry me to the bedroom / Snowboarders for Christ*

Trying to remember all the preferred sides of beds I've slept on. Remember to pick up Deborah's book that I left in the cafe after I couldn't eat my eggs.

I used to be really interested in cooking until I lost my appetite.  
Now I only like to eat bland things like oats, bread and bananas.

I dated an ex-christian with a theology degree. He used to carry me to the bedroom. We just went to sleep.

One night at dinner he told me that he had moved to Canada at 18 and joined a group called Snowboarders for Christ.

Digital will:  
Gift you all the porn I saved to my desktop in the folder with your name on it.

We sip wine together, the bottle you brought for this exact occasion. You pour what is left in our glasses back into the bottle when we have finished and read me passages from the book on your dresser.

Later we have dinner in Sandringham and you say 'Why don't you pay for this while I go to the bathroom?'

Have you ever realised that you don't love one of your parents?

Deciding to go for a drive to calm your nerves. Ending up in the Coromandel, swimming naked in a river with two staffies down the road from the Buddhist Retreat Centre.

Slipping off your shoes and rounding your toes over the top of the accelerator. Absentmindedly gliding the razor over a patch of eczema.

Feeling like a victim of circumstance when I fall hard for people in different cities. Enjoying it because it feels idealistic. It's good and purposeful to miss someone. It's being active without even getting out of bed or dressing myself or leaving the house at all.

I want to save our WeChat thread to a PDF file so I can read it like a book with a colour plate of nudes in the middle.

Kissing you until the toast pops up. Wanting to eat the toast immediately but not wanting my priorities to offend you.

I used to be in a relationship in which I was made to feel inadequate if I declined intimacy out of hunger or exhaustion.

Send you photos of nudist couples on beaches and pretend they are for our christmas card. Let's stay friends forever and die in a retirement home in Northland with chips and a fridge full of Double Brown.

Let's get a dog and spend the next 20 years worrying about who's looking after it at any given time of the day.

Eventually we have a giant argument about whether we pay the vet bill or just euthanise it.

I asked you to leave but now that you're gone I wish you'd come back. I want to WeChat message you and tell you that I love you and that I appreciate you holding me all night even though I get night sweats and have to use the sheet like a towel.



## *How to cut yourself off emotionally from other people*

Never have anything to say  
because you've been filing payslips  
for 8 hours

Ruin the party  
with an IBS episode

Have the flu at their flat,  
pile all the used tissues  
in communal living spaces

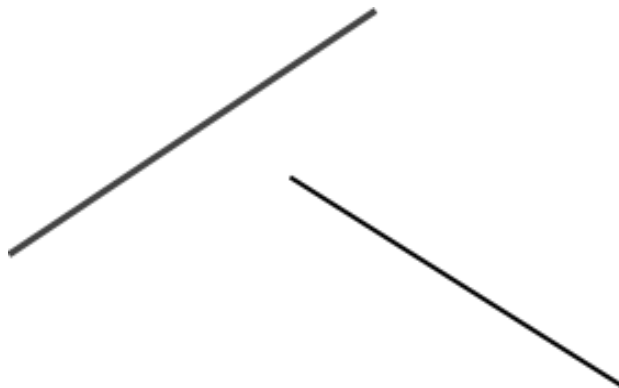
Help them reverse down the driveway but  
don't warn them before the wing mirror breaks  
against the side of the house

Unplug their laptop to charge your phone  
even though its processing  
biomedical data models overnight

Get their number and forget to  
press the save contact button

Break their tooth  
with the wine bottle  
but it's an accident

Tell them to replace your food  
even though  
they're a guest



21 MAR 1963

ASSORTED DRY CEREALS

STEAME W EAT

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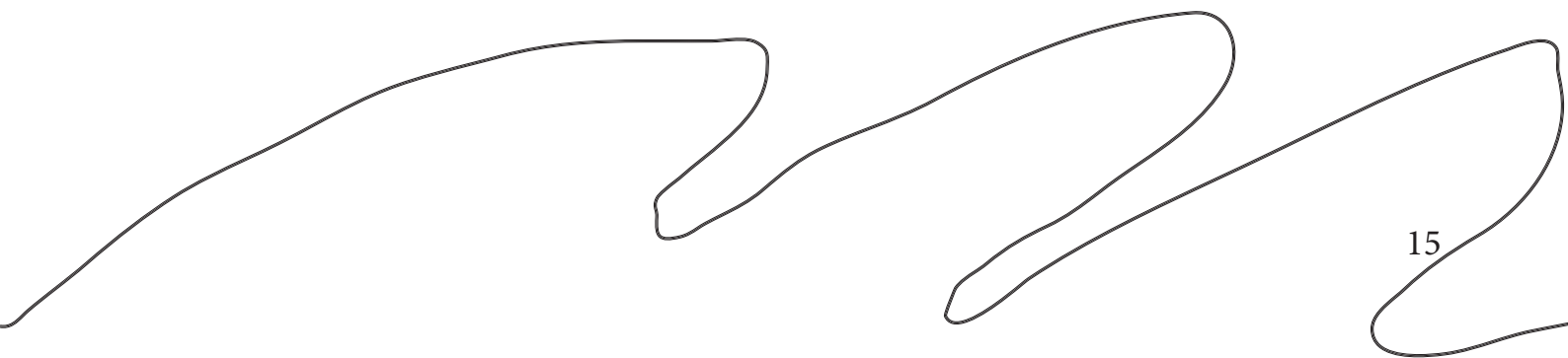
FRUIT

TOAST

BREAD

BUTTER

E





**Talia Smith**

*Those That I Could Have Loved*

He smells like clean laundry. It makes my heart ache. I imagine lying in bed with him on a Saturday morning, a warm glow from the morning sun, bathing us in its light. He'd have a bit of stubble and be snoring softly.

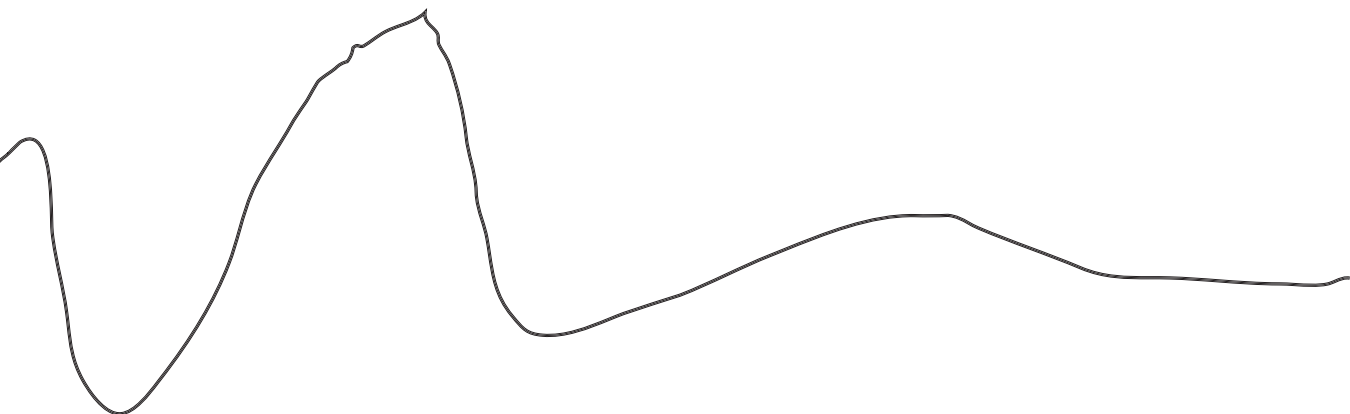
He's like every teen wet dream I've had. As he put the cigarette to his lips, I wished it was my breast instead. He'd be rough. We wouldn't last. It would end messily. He'd have to sell out and get a corporate job. I would swear to never date anyone like that again but get off to the memories when alone.

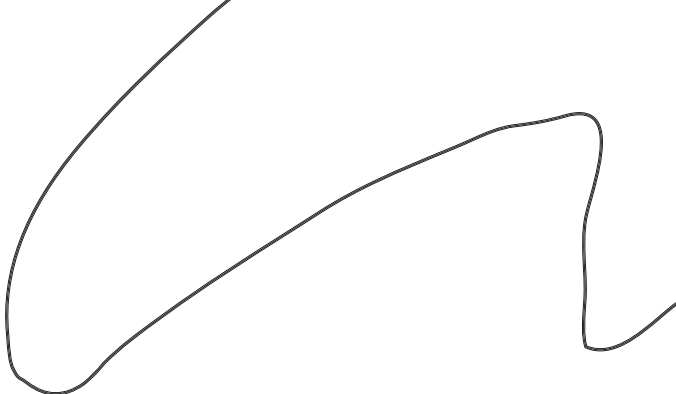


He's sweaty. He's working in a cramped fish and chip takeaway. We touch hands lightly as he gives me my change. I imagine that his hand lingers for longer than it should but he turns, yells out my order and looks past me.

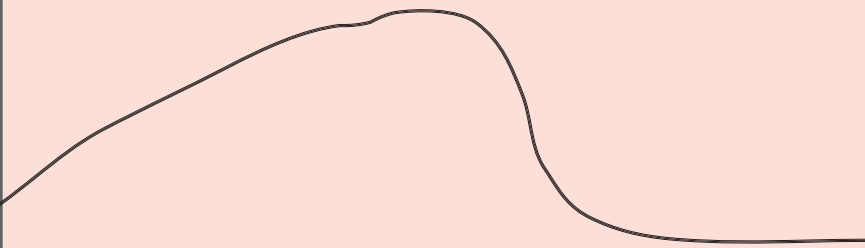
His name is Andrew. It's that he knows he is good looking that really gets me. I hate him for it. But I still want him to want me. I want to feel admired by the hot guy. I want to lead him on and then turn him down. I want to crush him. I want to fuck him.

He's an artist. He's shy and awkward and a little chubby. His smile is sweet, honest. Making love would be safe and warm. His kisses would be slow, exploratory. The tension would coil tighter in my belly with each languid swipe of his tongue.





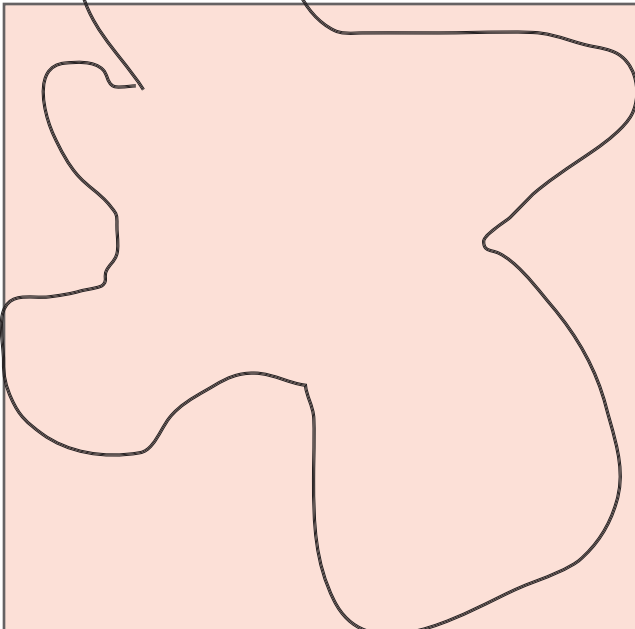




He's tall. He makes me feel small which is rare for me. He only thinks of himself. He says things like "you'd be more confident if you just lost weight".

He has good arms. Just that right amount of hair. Soft to the touch as I run my hand along his arm, tracing the veins. I want to feel his softness everywhere. I want to breathe in the same breath that he breathes out. I want to lick the salt of the sweat off his skin. I want to carve out a hole in his chest and hide in there forever.

He is older. He has salt and pepper hair. He would get irritated and call me immature. He would tell me that he was too old for this shit. He would sit outside my house in his car when we break up, calling me and then hanging up as soon as I answered. The next girl he would date would resemble me. But she would be even younger.



**Faith Wilson**  
*Heartbreak Phobia*

Everyone knows that I'm tragically in love  
everyone knows I see butterflies everywhere I go  
everyone knows that I'm opening up for the first time  
like a rose that's only half way to blooming  
and someone picks it  
maybe it will never reach its full potential  
or maybe someone will stick  
me in a vase of water  
with a nutrient sachet  
and admire my blossoming  
watch me slowly dying  
petals falling in twos and threes  
until the water is murky  
and all that's left is a dry stem  
covered in thorns  
and no one wants to clean it up  
and no one wants to touch it  
cos they don't want to get pricked.

## *are you satisfied?*

are you satisfied?

do you wake up in the morning smiling and excited for another day?

do you wake up to the sound of your own heart beating too loudly like a tom tom drum thump thump?

and do you then fail to get back to sleep because your thoughts can't calm your heart down?

or do you breathe through it and repeat that mantra you learned from nayirrah waheed poem and does it wash over you like the warmth of wetting your bed as a kid or a cold shower?

do you masturbate to the tender touch of the partner you love?

do you touch yourself to fantasies about your lecturer, or to far away memories of the last time you fucked?

do you eat breakfast happy with the knowledge it's nourishing your body, giving you energy to do all the things that you are capable of?

do you spend half an hour tossing up between toast or cereal or nothing at all and figuring out how many calories each has and then if you have one over the other will it impact the other things you want to eat that day?

do you love the skin you're in?

do you embrace the oppressive situation you're in and navigate the territory with wisdom and wit?

does you feel the weight of it crushing you and making it hard to get out of bed?

do you get out of bed at all?

do you even wake up?

if you could sleep forever would you?

if you could wake up another person would you?

if you could wake up next to the person you most desire who would it be?

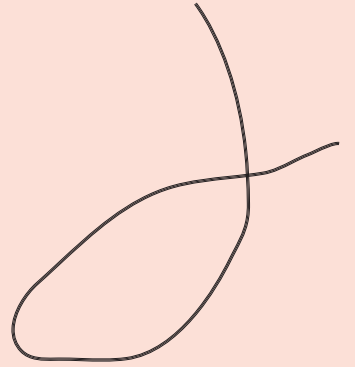
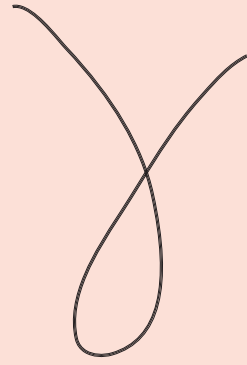
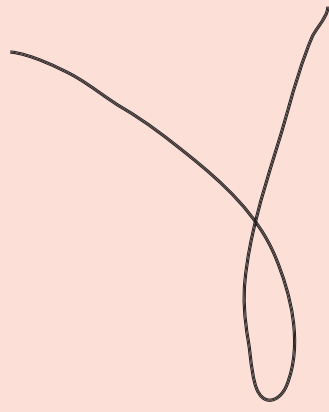
do you desire yourself?

do you want to be yourself?

if you don't can you become who you want to be?

can you realise your own desire?

will you ever feel satisfied?



## About our contributors

**JM Francis** is an artist and writer based in Auckland. Her work currently revolves around arranging personal anecdotes on Google Docs. Francis is co-founder of the socially experimental art collective 'The Date Club' and holds a BA/BFA (Hons) conjoint from the University of Auckland and Elam School of Fine Arts.

**Natasha Matila-Smith** (Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Hine) is an artist and writer based in Tāmaki Makaurau. She graduated from the University of Auckland with a MFA in 2014. Natasha's practice rejects fixed identities. She often approaches heavy themes with satire, with her recent works dealing with social anxieties through combining contemporary culture with the digital landscape.

**Talia Smith** is an artist and curator of Samoan, Cook Island and New Zealand European descent. Originally from New Zealand she is now based in Sydney, Australia. Her visual arts and curatorial practice utilises the mediums of photography and video to examine the emotional and physical traces we leave behind on the landscape, the histories we build and the ruins we leave. She has exhibited and curated shows at artist run spaces in Australia, New Zealand, Germany and New York with solo shows in both Australia and New Zealand.

**Tayi Tibble** is a Wellington-based poet of Māori descent (Te Whānau-ā-Apanui/Ngāti Porou). She has recently completed her studies at the Institute of Modern Letters and was awarded the 2017 Adams Prize for writing from the Victoria University of Wellington. She has previously been published in *Starling*, *Mana* magazine and *Palabras Prestadas*.

**Faith Wilson** is an artist and writer. She is moving to Canada to be with her love and to finish writing a collection of poetry. She is learning to love herself and find peace in her skin and giving gratitude and grow her roots. You can follow her on instagram @sprite\_\_remix (that's two underscores btw).

